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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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THE LURE OF TIN

Tin is a vital metal. Since we can no longer obtain it from the Far East it begins to have the lure of gold. Although small quantities are known to exist in a number of places in North America, little of commercial value has been found.

Various kinds of tin ore are on display in the Royal Ontario Museum. Tin usually occurs as the mineral cassiterite which is tin combined with oxygen but it also occurs uncombined as the native metal. It is found in veins in the rock, most likely near special types of granite. Since this metal does not decompose or "rust" it may be washed down streams and found in placers. The durable character of tin makes it particularly useful. One of its most common uses is as a thin film over sheet iron cans for preserving food. Tin should be diligently sought in Canada.

AQUAMARINE FOR AUGUST

Aquamarine is a lovely, cool stone for a summer month. It is the clear, pale blue variety of that common mineral beryl. Except for colour it is exactly the same thing as the most precious of gems, the emerald. It is not considered precious, however, for it is much too common, occurring as it does in almost all parts of the world. Although not quite so hard as ruby and not so rare as emerald, it has all the other virtues of both.

In olden times aquamarine was reputed to give aid against foes in battle or in litigation, to quicken the intellect of the wearer, and to cure laziness. Perhaps people liked to be lazy, for the stone, though beautiful, has never attained the popularity it deserves.

In the Royal Ontario Museum there is one large aquamarine in particular that is especially interesting, for it is cut from Ontario material. So far, the quantity of gem material found here has not been great.

SNAKES FROM HAIRS?

The old formula for producing a hair-snake or hair-worm was simple enough. First you plucked a long hair from the tail of some convenient horse, and then dropped it in a rain-barrel or watering-trough. You waited a few days before searching. Sometimes, perhaps, you were rewarded with a wriggling knotted hair-snake. Interest in this old belief, led us to enquire at the Royal Ontario Museum about these queer hair-like creatures. Here we found out that the hair-worm is a type of parasite roundworm, up to 5 or 6 inches long, and very slender. The facts of its life history are almost as strange as the fable. The female lays long strings of eggs in lakes or ponds. The larvae, the first stage of the hair-snake to hatch out of the eggs, bore their way into some aquatic insect. The next step is not well-known, but the latest stage occurs in terrestrial beetles, grasshoppers and crickets. From these insects the adult hair-worm emerges and drops into, or is actually conveyed to, rain-barrel, horse-trough, or lake.

MRS. BLOOMER WAS AHEAD OF HER TIME

Under the influence of the war worker and the bicycle we have become accustomed to seeing women in slacks, not only for country and sports, but also for everyday wear. However we are still apt to think of trousers for women as a comparatively recent development. According to the Royal Ontario Museum this is not so. Almost a hundred years ago, when crinolines were the accepted style, Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, a very determined lady, started a crusade for dress reform, and advocated the wearing, by women, of long baggy trousers which were known as "bloomers." Although the "bloomer" style met with little success and a great deal of laughter, the name has become part of the English language. The ghost of Mrs. Bloomer, who was so far ahead of her time, is now probably wearing slacks and smiling happily.

FISHWORMS — A MINOR INDUSTRY

Specialists at the Royal Ontario Museum believe that earthworms were exterminated in Ontario by the glaciers and have been re-introduced by man. Certainly worms are now most abundant in settled areas. The discarding of worms by fishermen is one way in which they have spread.

Surprisingly large numbers of worms are sold each year for bait. This undertaking is just as important to the village lad as the paper route is to the city boy. The large dew-worm, the one sold for bait, is found most abundantly on well-watered lawns or golf courses. Here the worm-picker secures a steady supply during the hot, dry summer period when worms are scarce elsewhere.

The demand for fishworms reaches its peak in July and August during which period tens of thousands of worms are shipped to all parts of the province from Toronto, the centre of the bait business in Ontario. Although the season is short the fishworm provides full-time employment for a limited number of people and as a part-time job helps to round out the budget of many Ontario families.

THE COCKROACHES' FAMILY TREE

The cockroach is one of the oldest and most primitive insect types. As evidenced in the Royal Ontario Museum it has a lineage that extends back to the Coal Age,—a 300 million year pedigree. Cockroaches of ancient times were very similar in form to their modern descendents but much larger in size, some attaining nearly six inches in length. They lived along the margins of the widespread swamps existent during the Coal Age and scurried in and out of the damp cracks of rotting tree trunks and stumps. Carcasses of amphibians and a variety of vegetable substances probably served them as food.

Of the many kinds of modern cockroaches, five have gone domestic and are now almost cosmopolitan in distribution. They have been carried, unintentionally, in ships to many parts of the globe and are now lowly and unappreciated kitchen scavengers. In this role they seem unworthy of their ancient lineage.

ONCE UPON A TIME women wore dresses with thirty yards of material in them. Crinoline dresses in the Royal Ontario Museum show these extravagant styles.